

## e-learning and 23 things – the East Gippsland way

In 2007, East Gippsland Shire Library and Community College East Gippsland joined resources to conduct a community engagement e-learning project entitled 'Building Online Communities in East Gippsland'. One of six projects funded through the Australian Flexible Learning Framework, the Community Engagement Program formed part of the national training system's e-learning strategy.

Often rural students find that access to learning and information involves a costly and long journey. This project provides resources for East Gippsland residents to learn and use online technology for social communication, education and training in their own local area.



Project induction day – Bairnsdale

Community leaders Denece Sippo, from East Gippsland Shire Library and Jan Roberts, of Community College East Gippsland, took advantage of improving regional internet services to link the Library, Community College, neighbourhood houses and community centres across the Shire. Project delivery focused on building the skills of staff and volunteers in neighbourhood houses and community centres with a train the trainer model developed to aid in delivery and facilitation of e-learning opportunities, library resources and other information. How to introduce the community to the options available was the first hurdle to negotiate. Which is where Web 2.0 came into play.

Helen Blowers *Learning 2.0 program for library staff* was used as a vehicle for learning. Consisting of 23 Things (or small exercises) that you can do on the web, the program encourages people to take control of their own learning through exploration and play, becoming familiar with Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, wikis, flickr, and podcasts.

The second phase of the project included the facilitation of three online e-learning sessions using LiveClassroom. Presented from offices in Bairnsdale to participants across East Gippsland, all sessions were well received despite some technical hitches.

In November, the project was showcased at the Australian Flexible Learning Framework Conference in Cairns where it attracted a great deal of attention.

The program has achieved most of what was intended, and has strengthened existing links within the wider community.

Explore our blogs at <http://iblog.net/bolceg> or for more information about Learning 2.0 visit <http://librarybytes.com/>

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## Cultural Connections in Brisbane libraries

The *Cultural Connections in Libraries* program began in 2003 as a partnership between Brisbane City Council Library Services and the Creative Communities Team. Highlighting the new and emerging refugee and migrant communities, the aim of the program has been one of inclusion.

By initiating special activities, the program is designed to increase the visibility of the diverse cultural and ethnic groups in positive ways; strengthening cross-cultural connections, creating new relationships and networks within the wider community, creating a sense of the local library as a safe, welcoming place while providing a platform for a sharing of cultures.

Each project focuses on a particular culture or a combination of cultures and takes months of planning as community organisations and individuals are invited to assist in their program's development thereby becoming active participants in shaping the final product.

The formula used in the two pilot projects *Fabric: the fabric of the community* and *Vietnam: a cultural Journey* proved successful. This included displays, workshops, music, demonstrations, talks, films and a celebration day.

The programs come with their own distinctive vibrancy as the library is transformed with mannequins dressed in cultural clothing, artwork appears on walls, and display cases become filled with cultural artifacts.

*Cultural Connections in Libraries* continues to deliver opportunities for the people of Brisbane to discover a diverse mix of cultures from across the globe. The program directly involves the community, supports capacity building and adds value and meaning to library services.

By promoting improved community relations between new and established communities and using the library as the facilitator of a safe, welcoming and supportive environment, the program continues to connect and celebrate the diverse communities of Brisbane. Soon there will be a celebration of Indigenous Culture taking place in Brisbane Square Library in the heart of the city.

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